

## **Challenges and Effects of Low Patronage of Resources and Services in Ahmadu Bello University Agricultural Libraries: Librarians Perspective.**

By

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the perceptions of librarians on challenges and effects of low patronage of library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Nigeria. Agricultural libraries play a vital role in advancing education, research and innovation in agriculture and related fields, yet their utilization remains low, raising concerns about their relevance in the digital age. The research has three objectives, namely: to determine the effects of low patronage of Library resources and services, to find out the perception of librarians on low patronage of library resources and services and to identify the challenges that are associated with Library users' low patronage of Library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria, Nigeria. A survey design was employed, using total enumeration sampling of all forty-seven (47) librarians in the Agricultural Libraries. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages). Findings revealed some of the effects of low patronage to include reduced academic performance, weakened research output and declining institutional relevance. Librarians perceived that the root causes of this problem include outdated and insufficient collections, poor awareness of available services, low levels of information literacy, preference for easily accessible digital alternatives etc., the challenges identified span infrastructural, technological, administrative, and user-related barriers, such as poor funding, restrictive access policies, and so on. This study concludes that low patronage reflects not only user attitudes but systemic issues requiring strategic interventions. It recommends regular updates and modernization of collections, embracing open access policies, proactive outreach and user-centered service delivery to reposition agricultural libraries as indispensable partners for research, education and national development.*

**Keywords:** *Librarians' perceptions, low patronage, agricultural libraries, challenges.*

### **Introduction**

Libraries are foundational pillars of education, research, and societal advancement, offering curated access to information resources. Libraries have long been recognized as critical institutions for knowledge preservation, dissemination and accessibility (IFLA, 2021). In the digital age, their role has evolved to include both physical and virtual resources, making them indispensable for education, research and community development. Scholars like Chowdhury (2020) emphasize that libraries are pivotal in bridging information gaps, particularly in specialized fields such as agriculture. Agricultural libraries curate resources such as journals, extension materials, and datasets critical for addressing food security and sustainable farming (Anunobi and Edeka 2020). Their unique focus distinguishes them from general academic libraries.

Modern agricultural libraries offer diverse resources and services, such as digital databases, e-journals, multimedia tools, information literacy training, reference assistance, and community outreach programs designed to meet the needs of users. (Nwokocha, 2019; Issa et al., 2021). However, the effectiveness of these services depends on their alignment with user needs. The users of agricultural libraries are diverse, spanning academic researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, extension officers, policymakers, and rural farmers.

IFLA (2020) categorizes these users into three groups: academic users (e.g., researchers and students), practitioners (e.g., agronomists and extension workers), and community users (e.g., farmers). Each group has unique information needs: academic users prioritize peer-reviewed journals, while farmers seek localized, practical solutions (Adeleke & Nwalo, 2021). Libraries must balance these needs with limited budgets and resources. This challenge underscores the need for innovative solutions and strategic planning to enhance user satisfaction. (Hernon & Matthews, 2023).

Today, most library users find it difficult to explore the world of information sources, thus, leading to poor appreciation and patronage of library which contribute to their inability to conduct meaningful researches. In agricultural libraries, the implications of low patronage are particularly critical. When library users fail to engage with available resources, it limits their access to essential information needed for modern agricultural practices, sustainable development, and research breakthroughs. Moreover, the specialized nature of agricultural information means that the lack of proper guidance on resource utilization can lead to significant gaps in research and education (Ibrahim & Musa, 2020). This scenario places librarians in a challenging position, as they are expected not only to manage the library's collections but also to actively promote and facilitate user engagement with these resources.

There are several libraries today in colleges, polytechnics and universities. However, the one concerned in this study is Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria. Ahmadu Bello University was established in 1962, as one of Nigeria's oldest and most prominent universities. The Agricultural Complex itself is a key part of the university, dedicated to agricultural research, education, and innovation. In Nigeria, agricultural libraries are pivotal to advancing agricultural research, development, education, innovation, and sustainable development. Despite their strategic importance, anecdotal evidence suggests a decline in patronage, necessitating a study of librarians' perceptions on the challenges.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Libraries are charged with the responsibility of satisfying the varying needs of its users especially students who are using information resources like books, journals and other non-book related materials both in print and electronic formats. The contents and features of these information resources are described and organized in the library through classification, cataloging, indexing and retrieval. This therefore, makes the library the most preferred choice and the sole custodian of information to users in the time past.

However, it was observed by the researcher that since there has been a radical change in the way information is being accessed and disseminated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the influx of information and communication technology (ICT), it appears to have led to low patronization of resources in agricultural libraries. Aina (2019) emphasizes that a disconnect often exists between the resources available and the actual usage by patrons, which can be attributed to several factors,

including lack of awareness and inadequate marketing of library services; the underutilization of library resources and services remains a persistent challenge globally and locally, raising concerns among scholars and practitioners. The low patronage of library resources and services has far-reaching implications. It not only affects the academic performance and research output of students and faculty but also diminishes the library's relevance in the digital age (Adeyemi, 2022). By implication, libraries are losing relevance in the business of providing information to current and potential users. With these challenges, therefore, libraries and librarians are facing a pressing need to regain and retain their users.

Based on this, the study seeks to find out the perception of librarians on the challenges and effects of low patronage of library resources and services in agricultural libraries, ABU, Zaria.

### **Research Objectives**

The study will be guided by the following research objectives:

1. To determine the effects of low patronage of Library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria, Nigeria.
2. To find out the perception of librarians on low patronage of library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries ABU, Zaria, Nigeria.
3. To identify the challenges that are associated with Library users' low patronage of Library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria, Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Effects of low Patronage of Library Resources and Services**

The decline in patronage of library resources and services have far reaching effects on academic success and research. This is highlighted by Bello and Ahmed (2020) who found that students and faculty members who underutilize library resources often face difficulties in accessing quality academic materials, leading to a decline in research quality; it also noted that low patronage also undermines the role of libraries in academic institutions, as unutilized resources become obsolete over time. Low patronage can lead to a decline in the perceived relevance of library services, reduction in library funding, and underuse of available resources (Ibrahim, 2021).

A critical factor contributing to the low patronage of libraries is insufficient funding. In Nigeria, libraries often receive inadequate financial support, resulting in obsolete collections, dilapidated infrastructure, and a shortage of professional staff. This financial neglect hampers effective service delivery and limits the libraries' ability to extend services to rural areas, thereby restricting access to information for a significant portion of the population (Okwu & Oporum, 2021).

The advent of the internet and digital technologies has also influenced library usage patterns. Many students now prefer online resources over traditional library materials, perceiving them as more accessible and convenient. While digital resources offer vast information, over-reliance on them can lead to superficial understanding and the neglect of critical evaluation skills that are often developed through engagement with curated library collections (Yakubu & Bamidele, 2023).

Furthermore, a lack of awareness and inadequate information literacy skills contribute to the underutilization of library services. Students may be unaware of the range of services offered by libraries or may lack the skills to effectively navigate and utilize library resources. (Ukachi & Onuoha, 2022). The image and approachability of library staff also play a role in patronage levels.

Perceptions of librarians as unapproachable or unhelpful can deter students from seeking assistance, leading them to rely on alternative information sources (Abdulsalami & Efosa, 2020).

### **Perceptions of Librarians on low Patronage of Library Resources and Services**

Librarians, as custodians of knowledge and facilitators of access to information, hold critical views on the issue of non or low patronage of library resources and services. In many academic, public, and special libraries, librarians perceive low patronage as a significant challenge that undermines the value and purpose of the library. They often attribute low usage to various factors, including lack of awareness, inadequacy of marketing and promotional efforts, lack of visibility poorly attended orientation and user education programs, digital alternatives, lack of relevant or updated materials, inadequate staffing and lack of professional development, unresponsive digital catalogs, poor collection development policies, assess and use of mobile devices, outdated materials, and poor service delivery. These perceptions are grounded in their daily interactions with users and non-users alike, and have expressed concern over the dwindling use of library resources and services despite significant investment in collections and infrastructure. (Edewor et al., 2018; Ali & Dlibal, 2019; Nnadozie & Nnadozie, 2019; (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2019; Yusuf & Iwu, 2020; Ezema & Ugwu, 2020; Ogungbeni et al., 2022).

Some librarians express that the physical layout and aesthetic appeal of library spaces influence user engagement. Poor lighting, inadequate seating, and lack of comfort deter users from spending time in the library. (Udo-Anyanwu & Odu, 2021). There is also a perception about the gap between librarians' service provision and user expectations. Librarians report that many users expect high-speed, on-demand services similar to commercial information providers like Google Scholar, JSTOR, or Amazon. The inability of libraries to match such speed and user experience creates dissatisfaction, leading to reduced patronage (Owolabi et al., 2020).

Finally, librarians are beginning to view low patronage as a call for innovation. Many are now advocating for a redefinition of the library's role from a static repository to an active knowledge hub that embraces social media, mobile technology, virtual services, and community engagement.

### **Challenges Associated with low Patronage of Library Resources**

Several challenges contribute to the low patronage of libraries. These challenges can be categorized into infrastructural, technological, administrative and user-related factors.

#### **Infrastructural Challenges**

Poorly maintained physical infrastructure, inadequate study spaces, and a lack of modern facilities discourage users from visiting libraries. Agricultural libraries often struggle with outdated collections and insufficient funding for new acquisitions as well as dilapidated facilities and insufficient seating arrangements negatively affect user comfort and satisfaction, further reducing usage (Ibrahim,2021).

#### **Technological and administrative Challenges**

Technological and administrative challenges significantly contribute to low patronage of library resources and services, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Some of these include; the absence of formal policies supporting digital information services, lack of proper library management, bureaucratic processes in borrowing materials and limited operational hours, the lack of institutional support, inadequate platforms for online reference, poor staff digital skills, poor funding, frequent electricity interruptions, and users' lack of skills in using online resources,

inadequate ICT infrastructure including outdated hardware and software, resistance to change among library staff, limited technical expertise, and insufficient funding, hampers the effective use of technology in providing modern library services, which affects their ability to meet users' expectations for immediate and remote access to information resources (Onifade, 2021; Agu & Nnamdi, 2022; Chukwu & Onyema, 2022; Ogbemor, 2023; Edewor & Osuchukwu, 2023). There is substantial evidence in literature that these technological and administrative challenges in libraries requires multifaceted measures and interventions, to help address the issue of consistent low patronage.

### **User-Related Challenges**

Some of the major user-related challenges leading to non-patronage of library resources are indicated as lack of information literacy skills among users, psychological barriers such as library anxiety, confusion and intimidation by the vast amount of resources, dependence on digital and alternative sources of information, unfamiliar with library procedures, lack of ability to effectively locate, evaluate, and use information resources, which limits their ability to benefit from the library. Without the necessary skills to interact with library systems, students tend to rely on more familiar, though often less reliable, information sources like Google. (Mellon, 1986; Mahwasane & Mudzielwana, 2016).

Scholars have observed that students frequently bypass the library entirely in favor of quick online searches, because of time constraints, previous negative interactions with library personnel, part-time jobs, poor promotion of library resources and services, lack of awareness of the full scope of resources and services offered, even when the library holds more credible resources (Solanke & Nwalo, 2016; Abdulsalami & Efosa, 2020; Okonoko et.al 2022; Olowu, 2024). Users are less likely to utilize services they are not in tune with, it is evident that outreach programs require more attention.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology adopted for this study was the quantitative methodology and cross-sectional survey research design. The target population consisted of 47 Librarians of Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria. Structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Forty-seven (100%) copies of the questionnaires were administered, thirty-six copies were returned (77%) and total enumeration sampling technique was employed (the entire population) without drawing a subset or sample. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (Frequency and percentages).

### **Results and Discussion**

The Objective of this study sought to determine the effects of low patronage of library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, ABU Zaria. This is represented by table 2 and the discussion below.

**Table 1: Effects of low patronage**

STATEMENT	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%
affects students' academic performance	21	58	11	31	3	8	1	3	0	0
results in poor research and information retrieval.	17	47	16	44	0	0	3	8	0	0
reduces the visibility and relevance of Library services	16	44	10	28	8	22	2	6	0	0
leads to waste of Library investment and resources	18	50	15	42	3	8	0	0	0	0
discourages innovation among library Staff	15	42	6	17	9	25	5	14	1	3

**Source: Field Survey,2025.**

**Key: N=36; SA=Strongly Agree; Agree= A; Neutral=N, Disagree=D; Strongly Disagree=SD; Freq=F**

The table shows that 21(58%) respondents strongly agreed that low patronage of library services negatively affects academic performance, 18(50%) also strongly agreed that low patronage of library services leads to wastage of investment in library resources, while 17(47%) responded to low patronage of library services reducing research output and information retrieval. Furthermore, low patronage was linked to reduced visibility of library services and a decline in staff innovation 15(42%). This confirms Popoola’s (2021) argument that library patronage is directly linked to students’ academic success and that underutilization diminishes the relevance of libraries in higher education. This implies that if library investments are not matched with high patronage, institutions may face challenges in justifying continued funding.

**This Objective sought to find out the Perceptions of librarians on low patronage of library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria**

**Table 2: Perception of Librarians on low patronage**

STATEMENT	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	(F)	%								

Library users are unaware of the available services	18	50	6	17	4	11	6	17	2	6
Library services are underutilized due to the digital distractions	13	36	17	47	16	44	0	0	0	0
There is inadequate marketing of Library resources and services.	16	44	12	33	8	22	0	0	0	0
The library content does not align with user's information needs	7	19	15	42	4	11	6	17	8	22
Library staff need to be more proactive in engaging users	16	44	9	25	6	17	4	11	1	3

**Source: Field Survey, 2025.**

**N=36**

**SA=Strongly Agree; Agree= A; Neutral=N, Disagree=D; Strongly Disagree=SD; Freq=F**

The table shows the majority of librarians strongly agreed that users are unaware of available services 18(50%), and agreed that digital distractions divert user’s attention from libraries 17(47%). They also highlighted inadequate marketing of library resources and services16(44%) and misalignment between library content and user needs 15(42%) These perceptions mirror Yusuf & Onuoha’s (2023) findings that librarians often acknowledge gaps in awareness campaigns. This has also reinforced Agosto, Bell & Bernier’s (2021) call for an inclusive and proactive outreach to diverse user groups. The perception that staff must become more proactive 16(44%) resonates with Hernon & Matthews (2023), who advocate for reimagining librarianship as an engagement-centered practice. This suggests that if librarians do not promptly rise up to the occasion by making service delivery more attractive and user-centered, the relevance of the agricultural libraries will

keep declining and the resources and services will become obsolete without adequate utilization, leading to less impact on research and national development which is the core of agricultural libraries.

**This Objective sought to identify Challenges that are associated with low patronage of Library resources and services in Agricultural Libraries, ABU, Zaria.**

**Table 4: Challenges of low Patronage**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of awareness	28	78
Poor internet connectivity	24	67
Uncomfortable library environment	20	56
Outdated materials	28	78
Inadequate reading space	7	19
inadequate ICT facilities	29	81
Unstable power supply	15	42
Academic pressure/Time constraints	14	39

**Source: Field Survey,2025. N=36**

The table presents the major challenges highlighted include inadequate ICT facilities 29(81%), lack of awareness 28(78%), and outdated materials 28(78%). Poor internet connectivity 24(67%) and uncomfortable library environment 20(56%) also emerged as critical issues. These constraints align with studies across African contexts, where infrastructural inadequacies, power instability, and resource obsolescence consistently undermine effective library service delivery (Ocholla & Roux, 2019; Odu, 2021). Notably, academic pressure and time constraints 14(39%) further exacerbates limited patronage. This suggests that both systemic and user-related factors contribute to the challenge.

**Conclusion**

It can be concluded that low patronage of library resources is not merely a reflection of user apathy but a systemic challenge that touches on infrastructural deficits, weak marketing of services, inadequate funding, and evolving user expectations in the digital era. Librarians, as custodians of knowledge, recognize that their mandate transcends resource preservation to active engagement, education and innovation. The perception of librarians highlights the realities of those at the frontline of information service delivery, the challenges confronting agricultural libraries and the untapped opportunities for revitalization. In this light, agricultural libraries are not passive victims of technological disruption but potential indispensable partners in agricultural education, innovation and research, provided they rise to the challenge of reinvention.

Therefore, unless agricultural libraries adapt dynamically improved ICT, aggressive awareness creation and user-centered services they risk diminishing relevance in an academic environment where knowledge access is increasingly borderless and technology-driven. The librarians' perceptions captured in this research provide valuable insight for repositioning library services as indispensable partners in agricultural education and research.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends that:

Librarians in the agricultural libraries should be pro-active and pay more attention on innovating personalized services that would meet the specific needs of users. This will make the library more impactful and reduce the effect of low patronage of resources and services.

Agricultural Libraries should embrace open access policies, aggressive outreach and user-centered service delivery to increase awareness and attract more users to the library.

The Management of Agricultural Libraries should pay more attention on investing in stable internet, regular update of digital platforms and collections with functional computers to align with current agricultural research and learning needs in order to reposition agricultural libraries, strengthen academic relevance and help advance national development.

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